

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 16, 2024

The Honorable Bill Nelson
Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
300 E. Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20546

Dear Administrator Nelson:

As members of the Maryland Delegation, we write to request information regarding NASA's decision to cancel the On-Orbit Servicing, Assembly, and Manufacturing 1 (OSAM-1) mission on September 4, 2024.

OSAM-1 is a space technology mission developed to demonstrate NASA's capabilities to extend the lifespans of government-owned satellites and other satellites that were not originally built or intended to be serviced in space. Capabilities that OSAM-1 seeks to demonstrate include rendezvous, autonomous capture, servicing and refueling in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) with spacecraft not built for these purposes, as well as relocation of spacecraft and on-orbit assembly and manufacturing. This technology will grant satellite operators new ways to manage their fleets more efficiently and will help mitigate growing concerns about space debris. This demonstration intends to show the ability to repair and restore existing satellites, prolong satellite mission life, and pave the way for more sustainable and cost-effective space missions in the future. We are currently witnessing a commercial boom in space launches, and it is critical that NASA commits to the priority of controlling the growth of orbital debris, especially during a time when private actors may not feel incentivized to do so. Furthermore, defense stakeholders have expressed growing interest in space servicing, mobility, and logistics competencies to conduct dynamic space operations in support of national security interests. There is currently no existing operation that demonstrates the unique capabilities of this technology within U.S. public or commercial missions.

On February 29, 2024, NASA ordered an orderly shutdown of the OSAM-1 mission, citing technical, cost, and scheduling challenges as well as the overall funding environment. Recognizing the value of the mission, Congress directed NASA to continue the OSAM-1 mission in the Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024* (P.L. 118-42):

On-Orbit Servicing, Assembly, and Manufacturing-1 (OSAM-1).-In lieu of the Senate report language, the agreement provides \$227,000,000 for OSAM-1 to adjust the mission to ensure a 2026 launch within the cost profile assumed in the fiscal year 2024 budget request. Consistent with recommendations by the OSAM-1 Standing Review Board, NASA is directed to reduce testing requirements and make the necessary technical decisions, including potential de-scoping of some non-essential capabilities, to meet these launch and budget requirements. If this is not possible, NASA should initiate another Continuation Review in September 2024. Further, NASA

is directed to work with the Department of Defense on a plan for a potential use, as practicable, of OSAM-1 for space mobility capability, and to provide the Committees with the plan not later than 180 days after enactment of this act.

It is our understanding that in April 2024 NASA received an updated plan from the mission team, which included a rescope of the mission to meet the launch and budget requirements, as directed by Congress, and reduced testing requirements to adopt a Class-D designation in line with the standard posture of a technology demonstration project. It is also our understanding that the OSAM-1 mission team has proceeded with executing on this updated plan.

On September 4, 2024, members of the Maryland delegation were notified of NASA's intent to proceed with canceling the OSAM-1 mission. NASA officials cited feasibility of the 2026 launch plan, risk tolerance, lack of interest from potential partners per verbal communication, return on investment, and interest in expanding other Space Technology Mission Directorate (STMD) priorities. The Delegation wishes to note that return on investment and other STMD priorities are extraneous factors that Congress did not include in its direction. Furthermore, we have concerns regarding the Agency's decision-making process.

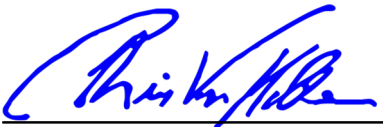
In order to assess the Agency's cancellation decision, we request the following information by September 23, 2024.

1. A copy of the 2026 launch plan.
2. A copy of the close-out plan.
3. The execution status of the mission as of the September 4th cancellation announcement.
4. The number of NASA civil servants and number of contractors associated with OSAM-1 as of the September 4th cancellation announcement.
5. The remaining cost-to-go if the mission were to proceed with the 2026 launch plan.
6. The estimated close-out and shutdown costs if the mission were canceled.
7. An explanation of the risk criteria in assessing the 2026 plan and a comparison to the standard risk criteria for a technology demonstration.
8. An explanation of where the project team and NASA disagreed in terms of executability and credibility of the 2026 launch plan.
9. A description of the review process conducted of the 2026 launch plan after the February 2024 Standing Review Board report and minutes from internal reviews and external independent reviews including, but not limited to, the May 2024 Space Technology Mission Directorate Program Management Council Review. If there was no external independent review conducted, please explain why that was the case.

10. The timeline of the Continuation Review process, including dates of relevant meetings. If the Continuation Review process was initiated before September, in contradiction of Congressional direction, please provide an explanation as to why the Agency expedited the timeline.
11. A description of the Agency's efforts to work with the Department of Defense on potential use or partnership for OSAM-1 spaceflight hardware, test facilities, and personnel; not to include the existing Inter-Agency Agreement with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) for work on a partnership with the Robotic Servicing of Geosynchronous Satellites (RSGS) project.
12. An explanation of the Agency's decision to delay issuing a Request for Interest to potential partners until after the September 4th cancelation announcement.
13. A description of the Agency's plan to retain as much of the OSAM-1 workforce as possible should the cancelation proceed.
14. A description of the Agency's commitment to the success of current and future missions at NASA Goddard.

We thank you for your diligence and timely response to our request.

Sincerely,



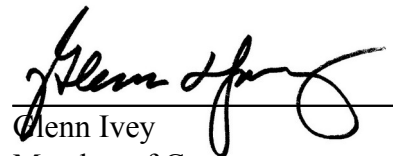
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Steny H. Hoyer
Member of Congress



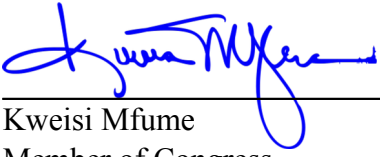
Glenn Ivey
Member of Congress



C. A. Dutch Ruppertsberger
Member of Congress



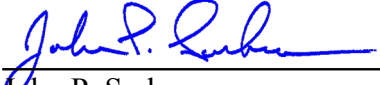
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



David J. Trone
Member of Congress



John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress